

You CAN Take It With You

by Lecia Langston

It's Not Just About Occupations— Get the Right Skills!

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics tells us that most workers will change occupations several times during their work life. Yes, you will probably move on to bigger and better things.

You might decide you hate your current occupation and want to do something else. Or, you might lose a job through no fault of your own. Remember that saying “constant change is the only constant?” And labor market change is inevitable.

Take Them With You!

While you may change your occupation, you can keep something even more vital—your skills, abilities, and knowledge. Most of these factors are transferable between many occupations. So, while you are figuring out what to do with your life, don't forget to get the important knowledge and skills that employers will want now and in the future!

What Employers Want

What skills do we project will be most in demand in the future? Well, it's not reading, writing and arithmetic, but it is darned close. What's the number one skill for jobs of the future? Reading comprehension—in other words, you need to be able to read and understand what's being said in work-related documents. Next in demand is “active listening”—giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times. (I'm sure you even have some friends that could use this skill.)

Other top skills are being able to speak and communicate verbally effectively, ability to write appropriately, critical thinking or using logic to solve problems, and active learning. These skills don't exactly fall in the “rocket science” category. However, employers say that many of today's workers lack these basic skills.

Knowledge is Power

If you want to be “in the know” you should also make sure you are adequately prepared with the knowledge that jobs in the future will require. What's by far the most important area of knowledge future occupations will need? The knowledge of customer and personal service.

Utah Top Ten Skills in Demand

Reading Comprehension
Active Listening
Speaking
Writing
Critical Thinking
Active Learning
Instructing
Coordination
Learning Strategies
Monitoring

Utah Top Ten Knowledge Areas in Demand

Customer and Personal Service
English Language
Clerical
Mathematics
Sales and Marketing
Education and Training
Administration and Management
Computers and Electronics
Mechanical
Psychology

Okay, just what does that mean? Basically, you need know how to determine a customer's needs, to meet quality standards for services, and evaluate customer satisfaction. Why is this area of knowledge so important? Most jobs will deal with customers. Your customer may be the little purple-haired older lady coming in for a style and set or the president of a multi-billion-dollar corporation that's interested in outsourcing its telephone call-in center to your company. If we're working for a living, we usually have customers.

Second on the list is knowledge of the English language. Don't think you have this knowledge just because English is your native tongue. You need to know correct grammar, punctuation, and how to spell (even without your spell-checker).

Next on the list is clerical knowledge. Don't think you are off the hook if you don't plan on having a “clerical” job. Most professional positions require that you can do your own word processing when

writing documents. And remember to study your math. Many jobs (particularly those with high pay) require a good knowledge of algebra, statistics, calculus and other types of mathematics.

And, the answer is...

When it comes to getting good, transferable skills, it really goes back to the basics. Get a good knowledge and skill base in reading, writing, math, customer service, etc. And you'll be able to get the job you want—now and in the future.

For more information about these job skills go to:

<http://online.onetcenter.org/find/>